

Kaiming English Grammar

开明英文语法

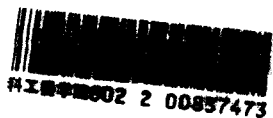
著者 林语堂

外语教学与研究出版社

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By Lin Yutang

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林语堂 编

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EDITOR'S NOTE

The present volume is a slightly abridged reprint of Lin Yutang's original work, which first appeared in 1933 under the imprint of Kaiming Shudian and ran into ten editions within less than fifteen years. The only justification that can be offered for bringing out a new edition of an old book such as this is that it has retained to this day much of its original novelty in the light of some latest developments in the methodology of foreign language teaching.

This is a book based on notional principles. Here grammar is regarded as a science of expression, and not as a dry-as-dust collection of categorical rules plus equally categorical exceptions. In the treatment of English grammatical facts the principle adopted is to proceed from the inner meaning to the outward form, and not the other way round.

It will be seen that the principles lying back of this grammar have very much in common with those of the communicative approach, notional or functional syllabus, etc., which have caught the imagination of so many applied linguists and language teachers. A review of the *Kaiming English Grammar* makes one feel that all these innovations are not so very new after all. One is even tempted to think that Lin Yutang's book, with its lucid explanations and copious illustrative examples, compares rather favourably with some of the more recent works. The inventory of notions and their ways of expression given in these books are often about as interesting as the menu of an English restaurant.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Nor was Lin Yutang the originator of the new concept of teaching grammar. As was acknowledged, he owed it to the works of Benedetto Croce, Ferdinand Brunot, Henri Frei, and more specifically of Otto Jespersen, notably his *Philosophy of Grammar* and *Modern English Grammar*, whose influence is evident in many pages of the present work.

It is interesting to note that in 1933, about three years after Lin Yutang had finished working on this grammar, Jespersen himself produced a one-volume grammar embodying the principle explained in *The Philosophy of Grammar*, entitled *Essentials of English Grammar*. A comparison of Jespersen's book with the *Kaiming English Grammar* will show that foreign students of English may derive as much, if not more, benefit from the latter as from the former.

Compared with many foreign-published English grammars, Lin Yutang's book has one extra merit to recommend itself to Chinese students of English. It not only explains how English differs from Chinese in the way of expressing the same notions, but goes deeper to show how speakers of the two languages often differ in their very notions and introduces the student to the English way of thinking that is new to him. The book might be counted as one of the first serious attempts at a practical comparative or contrastive grammar of English and Chinese, the need for which has been felt for so long.

Despite the "modernity" of the idea behind the book, the *Kaiming English Grammar* suffers from some obvious drawbacks, as is to be expected for a book written nearly half a century ago.

Although the illustrative examples are mostly given in idiomatic English, many of them having been culled from standard English works, the language used would appear

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a bit old-fashioned in some cases according to present-day standard. This applies to an even greater extent to the Chinese examples, which would often seem rather odd to today's readers. Some definitions and explanations would also need reformulating.

But the most serious drawback of all is to be found in the "notions" expressed in quite a few of the examples given in the book, which are at times irritatingly trivial and in some cases downright harmful. This defect detracts from the value of the book.

As this is an English grammar intended for teachers and students at advanced levels, no attempt has been made to do away with all such examples in this edition. The editor has done little more than leaving out the more glaring ones besides correcting noticed errors, typographical and otherwise. The old system of transliterating Chinese characters originally used has also been kept intact, partly to serve as a reminder that this is an old book republished for the reader to make a judicious use of.

L. X. H.

April 15, 1982

PREFACE

The Science of Expression

The *Kaiming English Grammar* represents the application of a new philosophy of grammar to the teaching of English grammar to Chinese students. It regards all grammatical forms and constructions as merely means of expressing notions, and grammar itself as a science of expression. Instead of starting from the outward form to the inner meaning, it starts from the inner meaning to the outward form, from the notions to the expression of these notions. Consequently, instead of concerning itself with the definitions and analysis of word-forms and formal changes, it goes deeper into the psychology of the speaker, and asks what are the notions back of the speaker's mind which he is trying to express, and by what grammatical means he expresses them. Grammar, therefore, concerns itself with (1) the notions, and (2) the expression of these notions. To these questions all grammatical changes and constructions are related and made subordinate. This emancipated view of grammar is made possible through the ideas of Benedetto Croce, and, more specifically, through the epoch-making works of Otto Jespersen (*The Philosophy of Grammar*, 1924) and Ferdinand Brunot (*La Pensée et la langue*, 1922).

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Chinese and English Compared

In a way, the *Kaiming English Grammar* contains within its covers the adumbrations of a new comparative grammar of the English and the Chinese language. This, again, reduces itself to a comparison of the English and Chinese notional categories and the different means employed to express these notions. The points mentioned, however, are strictly of a practical, rather than theoretical, nature, and are made in order to help the Chinese students overcome certain psychological difficulties. Many common grammatical mistakes can be corrected very easily by this psychological method, and by no other way. Where there are national differences in the notions themselves, the obvious way is of course to train the Chinese students in the new way of thinking. And where common notions exist in both languages, as in the majority of grammatical categories, the most interesting thing would be to show how *differently* the two languages express these notions. English grammar, presented in this way, therefore, teaches the English ways of thinking and expression. The student is constantly made to ask himself this question: If I have a given idea, how shall I express it in English?

Why Mistakes Are Made

The distinction between notions and their expressions is merely a logical, not a real, one. There is no thinking which is not a way of expression, and no expression which is not a way of thinking. We think while we talk, and

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many ladies talk in order to find out what they think. The ways of thinking and expression are really inseparably bound up with each other. Consequently, there can be no grammar claiming to teach the expressions which does not at the same time teach the ways of thinking. When grammatical mistakes are made, it is because the ways of thinking and habits of expression are wrong. Mistakes are of two kinds: those due to foreign ways of thinking, found naturally among the foreign students of a language, and those due to other psychological causes, like conflict of ideas, change of mind, human forgetfulness, influence of near-by words, etc. Mere knowledge of rules does not prevent either the foreign student or the native speaker from making mistakes. The only sensible way of teaching grammar and making it effective is, therefore, to regard it as the science of expression and build up certain correct, idiomatic habits of thinking and expression through repeated and systematic drills.

Grammar or No Grammar?

The failure of the teaching of grammatical rules to ensure correctness of expression has caused many people to throw grammar contemptuously aside, and advocate progressive and assimilative reading to take the place of conning over grammatical paradigms. So far as this method emphasizes the building of unconscious habits rather than rigid grammar, it is quite sound. The advocate of progressive reading, however, is labouring under a fear-complex, regarding grammar as the student's bugaboo. There is no reason why this should be so, when grammar is regarded, as it should be regarded, as merely a series of systematic drills

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on classes of expressions which every speaker must employ. No sane advocate of the reading-without-grammar method would deny that the value of such reading lies really in picking up turns of expression in living contexts, and that by arranging these turns of expression in notional classes and providing systematic drills, the picking up of such expressions can be made much easier and more pleasant. There is no gainsaying the fact that coming across a lone expression here and there and finding its parallels after long intervals is less effective and less convincing than having that lone example immediately reinforced by a dozen other examples of the same class and construction. Put in this way, there can be no argument against grammar.

The Bugaboo of Rules

I should have mentioned a third cause of grammatical mistakes, that due to efforts at "correctness" and fear of breaking grammatical rules. This fear can be carried so far as to override all natural idioms. The poor boy who begins to say "Whom are you?" after having learnt grammar at a night-school, or the Ziegfeld Follies girl who says "between you and I" with some sort of conscious pride is really only labouring under a confusion of mind engendered by the subtle rules of grammar. Even among foreign students, this type of grammar with so many "don'ts" and "shall-nots" is more likely to make the school-boy feel he is treading treacherous ground in a room full of traps and secret doors rather than using plain English to express his ideas. Such abominations as "if war will break out next week" and "I had been sick before yesterday noon" are

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only the products of this type of grammar teaching. Psychologically speaking, correctness is the enemy of natural expressiveness, and the teaching of grammar, instead of increasing the student's power of expression, can actually become the nightmare which makes all natural expressiveness impossible.

“All Grammatical Rules Leak”

But there is a deeper logical reason for the futility of rules. It is Edward Sapir, the gifted philologist, who says that all grammatical rules leak. There is nothing harder to bear than the college graduate who has learnt or taught a little grammar, and who, always armed with rules of tense sequence or syntax in much the same sense as a professional lawyer is armed with the articles of a criminal code, jumps upon your perfectly idiomatic expressions, possibly correcting your “let alone...” into a “letting alone...”, insisting that it must be a participial phrase, or changing your “the boat sails next Monday” into “the boat will sail, etc.” If the incidental remarks contained in this book can help to shake the teacher's faith in rules and reveal the more intimate phases of an Englishman's speech, it will have served some purpose.

A Grammar without Rules

It is time that we replace the categorical rules and equally categorical exceptions with more observation of the living facts of the language. The power of expression can be trained only by learning the expressive, everchanging idioms,

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and not by putting on the grammatical strait-jacket. Grammar, as the science of expression, should be more subtle and less rigid; it should address itself more to the speaker's intentions and less to the rules and definitions. It should be more concrete and wallow less in the terms of Latin origin. It should also be more positive and less like a criminal code. It has been the effort of the present author to replace such categorical rules by observations on the present usage. The English language is a living thing, and this is the only way to deal adequately with it. It is hoped that, through this means, the student will form a more intimate acquaintance with modern English usage than is otherwise possible.

It remains only to acknowledge my great debt to all previous writers on the subject who take the same views of grammar as I do. My debt to Prof. Jespersen and his *Modern English Grammar* and *Philosophy of Grammar* will be evident to all users of the said books. I have incorporated his views and examples in this book on many points, although, naturally, I have not dared to go quite as far in the matter of new terminology in a book that is intended for general school use. Thus, I have managed to keep all the eight parts of speech intact, for instance. Above all, I have derived courage from him, as well as from Prof. Ferdinand Brunot and M. Henri Frei, for this somewhat heretical venture. Thanks are also due to the authors of the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* and *Modern English Usage* for enlightening articles and examples.

West End Gardens, Shanghai.

May 26, 1930.

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